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Ms. Georgie Anne Gever

STAT

Dear Georgie Anne:

Here is Admiral Turner's guest column for this year. I think it is a little different approach to an old subject. Hope you and your editors like it.

Thanks very much for giving us the opportunity again.

Sincerely,

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Herbert E. Hetu

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Letter to the Graduating Class of 1980

Your parents and I stood where you stand today in the decade after World War II. The world was trying to pick up the pieces left by the war, and the United States was adjusting to a new role in that world. From the isolationism of the 1920's and 1930's, suddenly America's interests were worldwide and the mantle of free world leadership was ours. That changed our lives markedly.

Today, the United States faces changes in its relationship with the rest of the world that are just as profound and will surely affect your future just as much. The world in the 1980's will be as different from the 1960's and 1970's as were the 1940's from the 1930's.

A big difference for you, however, is that it is likely you will have to help America adapt to that change without a cataclysmic event, like a world war, such as we had. You will need to define America's new role in a world where conditions are evolutionary and change subtle--circumstance which you may not detect if you are not alert.

For thirty-five years, the United States has traditionally been the dominant force within the Western Alliance. Will we remain its leader in the 1980's? You can expect surprises from our allies.

The Europeans and the Japanese are prosperous economically and stable politically. They rightfully feel and act independent. They acknowledge that their security is tied to their relationship with us, but the scramble for oil and other natural resources today has become

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so vital to their existence that they must be heard in the debate on how the Western World will cope with these problems. The Alliance is not doomed to weaken, but it will change. It will function with far more regard for the independent voices of its members and that should strengthen it.

If our relationship with our allies must inevitably change, so too will our relations with the Soviet Union. You will need to adjust to a different Soviet Union in the 1980's. From Stalin, through Khrushchev, to Brezhnev, Soviet leadership has been cautious and conservative in avoiding possible military confrontations with the United States. In the 1980's, however, we will face the first Soviet leadership that does not feel inferior to us militarily.

Last December in Afghanistan the Soviets committed their military forces to combat outside the Soviet Bloc for the first time since World War II. Beyond demonstrating that they are likely to continue to take advantage of opportunities when they occur, does this aggressiveness indicate a new willingness to take risks?

How will the pressure from their deteriorating economy influence Soviet leaders? Will military adventures be used to cover up domestic economic deficiencies? Will the military be used to augment their diminishing oil production? Or will economic weakening keep them at home?

Much depends on who those Soviet leaders will be. Today's aged leaders will be gone. Their successors are unlikely to be as cautious or as predictable in dealing with the United States. You had better be prepared for more surprises from Moscow in the future than we have had in the past.

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The scramble for natural resources will be another element of change you will encounter in the 1980's. The most obvious example is oil. Should we take other imports for granted? We import virtually all of our rubber, coffee, chromium, cobalt, tin, and most of our manganese and nickel. Nations that used to be pliant to our resource needs are independently determining what is best for them, not us. And, as they develop, their own crecive needs compete with ours. You will have to understand these nations, their aspirations, and their people.

It is my fervent hope that you will not have a war to startle you into appreciating how different the role of the United States will be in the world of the 1980's than it was in the 1970's. Your parents and I did not have to be as perceptive as you will have to be.

Sound decisions about our future depend on your being aware of the world around you, and caring about it. You must understand where our interests, as well as those of our allies and potential enemies harmonize and where they conflict. Understanding that, you must help to define our nation's role in the world.

The pressures on you to conform to the conventional wisdom are great. But, don't forget that George Orwell's decade is here. The class that replaces you next fall will be the Class of 1984. "Doublethink" is already with us in some measure. You must resist the omnipresent, supremely superficial, instant analyses of our times which bombard you daily. Will your understanding of our nation's role in the world be dictated by some "Big Brother," or by your own independent thinking?

That is really what your education has been all about - to learn to think for yourself.

So my challenge to you is to reason deeply about the world of the 1980's - your world - and the part you want America to play in that world. What you decide will be critical to all free men. We can retain the mantle of world leadership or we can lose it. The reins of United States leadership will be in your hands much sooner than you think.